

RUDE AWAKENING (Warren Sonbert, 1976)

[Rude Awakening is a dazzling, funny, severe film about the value of human activity.] Comparable in encyclopedic thrust to Vertov's ebullient Man With the Movie Camera, it differs from that tradition in being more compressed, more cutting. [Sonbert is fascinated with spectacle (ice follies, ballet, street fairs), with everyday labor (butcher shops, frankfurter stands) and recreation, but underneath all this motion one senses a futility.] Like the shot of people thwacking each other with fake swords in the Renaissance Fair, [the images express playfulness, energy, and impotence. They are held on the screen just long enough to bring us into a sense of comic contradiction: cutting used for undercutting. Each shot is another pizza slice as harmless as a paper cut, but after awhile one begins to experience the accumulated sadness behind all the joy and motion, and the title, Rude Awakening, becomes more fitting and darker in its double-edged irony.] What sets Warren Sonbert apart from most other "non-narrative" experimental filmmakers, aside from his impeccable craftsmanship, is his ability to bestow the psychology of narrative cinema, of a Preminger or Sirk, onto his images of people. The connection between shots, even without a story-line, has an intuitive rightness that feels mysteriously syllogistic, though the fun is in knowing that much of this meaning may be audience projection while some may have been the filmmaker's intention. Sonbert lets you choose.

- Phillip Lopate

1000 EYES

W.S. had presented many  
~~was~~ ~~was~~ throughout the years has given us many  
one-man-shows ~~throughout the years~~ ~~at the cinema~~ ~~theatre~~ ~~show~~  
most  
his recent film, Rude Awakening  
tonight we will show